



2010 SUMMIT ON HEALTH, NUTRITION AND OBESITY: ACTIONS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

JOINT USE: INCREASE FLEXIBILITY TO DEVELOP JOINT USE FACILITIES

“I want to take what was discussed at the Summit and turn our state goals into action that will attack obesity on every level and create a healthy foundation for California’s future.” (Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, 2010 Summit On Health, Nutrition And Obesity, 2/24/10)

Action:

Assembly Bill 2705 (Hall), sponsored by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, has been introduced to expand eligibility opportunities and flexibility for communities to apply for joint use funds.

California Context:

Many communities lack safe, well-maintained, and accessible places for physical activity. This is particularly true in low income communities of color, where access to public spaces for physical activity and recreation (e.g. sports areas, parks, bike lanes/trails, and public pools) is limited and there are high rates of obesity. In California, one out of four teens reported having no access to a safe park, playground, or open space, and in Los Angeles County alone, more than 1.5 million children do not live within walking distance of a public park. Studies show that access to safe, local places for physical activity facilitates exercise and lowers obesity rates. People who live within 1 mile of a park, for example, are four times more likely to visit the park and have an average of 38 percent more exercise sessions per week than those living farther away. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined that creation of or enhanced access to places for physical activity can result in a 25 percent increase in the number of people who exercise at least three times per week.

Especially in challenging fiscal times, joint use – the term used when entities come together to share outdoor and indoor spaces – is an opportunity for cities, schools, and community organizations to develop parks, playgrounds, and public spaces for physical activity. Currently, California’s School Facility Program (SFP) allows school districts to receive grants to fund joint use projects if the district complies with certain requirements, but many communities find these restrictions too cumbersome, preventing the development of joint use projects which would increase access to public spaces for physical activity. For example, SFP-funded joint use facilities must be new and on a school site, preventing facilities from renovating existing facilities or developing facilities adjacent to a school. In addition, schools can only enter agreements with one other entity and partners cannot count the value of land, real property, equipment or other materials, and personnel toward their project contribution.

Success Stories:

Communities in California are utilizing joint use as an effective tool to develop public space for physical activity. In San Diego County, the Junior Seau Sports Complex in La Mesa was developed by the city and through joint use agreements, the facilities are used by a host of organizations for community programs like YMCA, school physical education classes, and after-school activities. Similarly, in Alameda County, the Oakland Unified School District, City of Oakland, and the Unity Council, a neighborhood development organization, partnered to develop the Cesar Chavez Education Center to support a host of community programs including after-school physical activity programs for the district’s K–12 students.